

INFO FOR EDUCATORS

A newsletter for school personnel published by the Massachusetts Department of Social Services

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About this Newsletter

Info For Educators is published by the Massachusetts Department of Social Services as part of an effort to strengthen the ability of child welfare and school professionals to work together on behalf of children and families.

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A MESSAGE FROM COMMISSIONER HARRY SPENCE

With its Family Networks initiative, DSS is increasing its capacity to support children and families in their community settings. We at DSS recognize that schools are our most important partner in supporting children in their community settings. This second edition of *Info for Educators* provides you with updates on our work developing Family Networks.

We'll finish putting the organizational infrastructure for Family Networks in place by the end of September. But the organizational infrastructure is only the beginning; we'll spend the next five to seven years consistently strengthening our community supports for children and families.

Over time, we hope to be able to keep more and more children safe either in their homes or close to home, so they don't become lost souls as a result of being the objects of our protective efforts.

As a result, we're working to deepen our relationships with the world of schools. In this edition of our newsletter, we'll tell you a little about our new initiative to bring schools and the child-serving human service system into closer collaboration. You'll find the names and numbers of the Education Coordinators for each of our twenty-nine Area Offices. We hope you'll find us a better partner as we advance our work of revising the child welfare system to better serve kids and families and better partner with schools.

UPDATE ON FAMILY NETWORKS

In our previous newsletter (Fall 2005), we described our new system of service delivery, Family Networks, and gave you a general overview of what the initiative is all about.

In this issue we will give you an update on the status of implementing our service network contracts. Contracts have been awarded for all the Area Lead Agencies and Regional Resource Centers. The Area Lead Agency's main responsibility is to coordinate the delivery of services to children and families. The Regional Resource Centers provide support to the Area Lead Agencies through program development, facilitating access to residential programs, cross-area coordination and may provide service coordination for special populations. In all cases, the DSS Area Office maintains responsibility for case management for all children and families.

- Please see list of Regional Resource Centers and Area Lead Agencies on page two. For more information please contact your local DSS Area Office.

Through Family Networks, DSS has increased its educational consultation, coordination, and advocacy capacity. Our intent is to ensure education stability and success for all of our children. All of the DSS Area Offices have an education coordinator assigned to them. In some of our regions, education coordinators are members of the Area Lead Agency team; in other regions, they are members of the Regional Resource Center team. Schools should contact education coordinators for assistance in education or special education placement related issues for families involved with Family Networks. The DSS social worker in the Area Office still maintains case management responsibility for all families involved with DSS.

- Contact information for the Family Networks Education Coordinators is on page four.

The Network Services RFR was issued this winter (February 2006) and contracts have begun to be awarded for certain categories of services. Below are descriptions of these services and timelines for implementation.

Support and Stabilization Services

These services are non-placement services to be provided to families and children in their homes or community. In addition to current providers, DSS encouraged placement providers in responding to this RFR, to be more flexible in meeting the varied needs of families in their homes and to work toward maintaining children in the community as much as possible.

Some of the kinds of services include:

- ★ Support to parents/caretakers focused on improving skills related to safety, supervision and nurturing;
- ★ Support to youth in improving relationships with families, schools and the community;
- ★ Placement diversion to provide assistance and support to families whose children are at imminent risk of out-of-home placement;
- ★ Reunification support and assistance to families whose children are returning from out-of-home placement settings; and
- ★ Clinical assessments, evaluations and diagnostic services.

- Contracts for many of these services began on June 1, 2006.

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AREA LEAD AGENCY AND REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

Regional Resource Centers ★ Area Lead Agency

Western Region

- ★ Pittsfield
- ★ Greenfield
- ★ Holyoke
- ★ Van Wart
- ★ Springfield

Central Region

- ★ North Central
- ★ South Central
- ★ Worcester East
- ★ Worcester West

Northeast Region

- ★ Cape Ann
- ★ Haverhill
- ★ Lawrence
- ★ Lowell
- ★ Lynn

The Key Program

Berkshire Center for Families & Children
 Berkshire Center for Families & Children
 The Key Program / Gandara / Children's Study Home
 The Key Program / Gandara / Children's Study Home
 The Key Program / Gandara / Children's Study Home

YOU, Inc.

LUK Crisis Center
 Wayside Youth & Family Support Network
 YOU, Inc.
 YOU, Inc.

Health & Education Services

Health & Education Services
 Health & Education Services
 The Key Program / Supportive Care
 MSPCC
 Health & Education Services

Metro Region

- ★ Arlington
- ★ Cambridge
- ★ Coastal
- ★ Framingham
- ★ Malden

Southeast Region

- ★ Attleboro
- ★ Brockton
- ★ Cape Cod
- ★ Fall River
- ★ New Bedford
- ★ Plymouth

Boston Region

- ★ Harbor
- ★ Hyde Park
- ★ Park Street
- ★ Dimock Street

Communities for People

Wayside Youth & Family Support Network
 The Guidance Center
 Bay State Community Services
 Wayside Youth & Family Support Network
 Wayside Youth & Family Support Network

Justice Resource Institute

Justice Resource Institute
 Justice Resource Institute
 Justice Resource Institute
 The Key Program
 The Key Program
 Bay State Community Services

Communities for People

Communities for People
 Communities for People
 Home for Little Wanderers
 Roxbury Youth Works/
 Communities for People

UPDATE ON FAMILY NETWORKS

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Intensive Foster Care

Thirty (30) provider agencies have been awarded contracts across the state to provide therapeutic services and supports in a family-based placement setting to children who require more intensive supports than what traditional foster care offers. There will be more emphasis for foster parents and staff to work on permanency goals, to pursue more timely reunification, and to ensure more stable placements. The expectation is that children placed in IFC will attend public school in the community where they reside.

- These contracts will begin July 1, 2006.

Stabilization, Assessment and Rapid Reintegration – STARR

This program model redesigns and replaces shelters, diagnostic programs and bridge homes. Programs are short-term placement services that provide a single door for children who need short-term services for a range of needs, including stabilization only, assessment, and/or respite. Services will be focused on supporting a rapid reintegration into the community or transition to a next placement. DSS increased the capacity for short-term placements statewide and tried to locate programs locally to help keep children connected to their communities and to minimize disruption to their lives. These children are expected to attend public school in the community.

- Most of these contracts will begin on July 1, 2006.

Group Homes, Behavioral Treatment Residences (BTR), and Residential Schools

These program models provide a range of residential options for children who need a structured group living environment. Group homes are designed for latency aged or adolescent children who require a less staff intensive setting than other models. The expectation is that these children will attend public school. Behavioral Treatment Residences are campus or community based group home programs that can provide staff secure treatment for children with serious emotional, developmental, cognitive and behavioral disorders who do not require an educational placement in an on-site school. The expectation is that these children will attend public school. Residential Schools are designed to provide staff secure placement for children who have not sufficiently internalized controls and require a more highly structured setting to help them manage their behavior. Special education services are provided to students based on their IEPs developed by their Local Education Agency (LEA).

- The expected start-up of these contracts is September 1, 2006.

These descriptions are to give you an idea of the kinds of models of services DSS plans to implement through Family Networks. For a better understanding of these Family Networks network services, contact your Area Director.

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and the Department of Education (DOE) are working together to launch a new initiative that will explore new ways for schools and mental health-human services to collaborate locally and regionally on behalf of the Commonwealth's distressed youth. The School and Community Support Program (SCSP) will join with the larger Initiative in the new set of awards.

The School and Community Support Program, a collaboration between DSS and DOE, began in FY 1997 to address the needs of foster and other at-risk children in elementary and middle schools. DSS funded school districts to provide services that would ensure an appropriate, equitable, and meaningful school experience for children in foster or out-of-home placements; prevent more restrictive placements of children who present behavioral challenges in classrooms by providing support and intervention to both children and teachers; and improve communication and relationships among school staff, DSS and foster/other at risk families. The current contracts end on June 30, 2006 and this RFR represents a new procurement for these services.

A Request for Response (RFR) is currently posted on Comm-PASS website: <http://www.comm-pass.com/>, with a due date of July 13, 12 noon. Eligible applicants are Educational Collaboratives, partnering with member school districts, and urban school districts that are not members of such Collaboratives. Eligible applicants for the SCSP alone are LEAs. Awards will be made in time for activities to begin with the '06-'07 school year.

Chaired by DSS Commissioner Harry Spence, the EOHHS-Schools Initiative provides new opportunities for schools and mental health-human services to work together for systems change and to improve collaboration among existing services and supports. Like the SCSP, it seeks to move the focus of state intervention with distressed youth from the acute to the preventive end of the spectrum. By responding to needs at the earliest possible intervention points and by improving communication and linkages among schools, state agencies, and local mental health, child welfare, and community service agencies, these partners can improve outcomes for distressed youth while preventing more restrictive placements.

The Initiative is supporting changes in how both schools and mental health-human services organize their services in order to improve collaboration, efficiency, and effectiveness:

- ★ At the local level, by using a comprehensive framework to realign current resources, including many successful school-mental health-human services pilot projects. Teams of local stakeholders will include school districts (Local Education Authorities, or LEAs), local offices of state mental health, social services, and youth services departments, and community-based organizations.
- ★ At the regional level, by creating inter-system teams that support the local school-mental health-human services teams by resolving persistent systems problems that cannot be resolved at the school or district level. Teams of regional stakeholders include Educational Collaboratives, large urban districts that are not part of Collaboratives, offices of state mental health, social services, and youth services departments, and the juvenile courts.
- ★ At the state level, through a Steering Committee that is providing leadership for statutory and regulatory change to support such infrastructure.

In addition to Commissioner Spence, the Steering Committee includes representatives of the State Departments of Education, Mental Health, and Youth Services; the juvenile court; and trade associations representing special educators, school superintendents, school committees, educational collaboratives, and 766 private schools.

Stay tuned for further information as the EOHHS-Schools Initiative and the School and Community Support Program move forward. Or, contact Evelyn Frankford, Director, at Evelyn.Frankford@state.ma.us and Susan Stelk, Manager, at Susan.Stelk@state.ma.us.

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